

EU to help reopen blocked oil pipeline in Ukraine

Brussels, Belgium

EU chief Ursula von der Leyen said yesterday the bloc will help reopen a damaged pipeline that pumps Russian oil through Ukraine to Hungary -- after Budapest accused Kyiv of stalling on repairs in an escalating row. Tensions have ratcheted up between the neighbours over the pipeline, with Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban invoking the issue to block a vital 90-billion-euro (\$104-billion) loan to Kyiv as well as a fresh round of sanctions on Russia.

Writing to President Volodymyr Zelensky, von der Leyen and European Council head Antonio Costa voiced hope the pipeline's "rapid repair" would allow the bloc to move forward "in a timely manner" with both the EU loan and sanctions package. "The EU has offered Ukraine technical support and funding. The Ukrainians have welcomed and accepted this offer," she said in a statement, released along with the letter and Zelensky's reply.

"European experts are available immediately," she said. Landlocked Hungary and Slovakia have accused Ukraine of deliberately delaying reopening the Druzhba pipeline, which Kyiv says was damaged by Russian strikes in January.

Ukraine had meanwhile been resisting the offer of EU help to get oil flowing again -- with Zelensky calling it "blackmail" to link the pipeline issue with support for its war effort.

But the letters published Tuesday showed the Ukrainian leader relenting, as the EU dialed up the pressure. Zelensky told the EU chiefs he accepted the "necessary technical support and funding to be able to conclude the repair work" on the pipeline, and would invite the chief of Ukraine's state oil and gas firm Naftogaz to "take this forward" with the EU.

Israel threatens of Gaza-level destruction in Lebanon 'unacceptable': UN

Geneva, Switzerland

Threats from Israeli officials to unleash Gaza-level destruction on Lebanon are "wholly unacceptable", the UN said Tuesday, and warned that "deliberately attacking civilians or civilian objects amounts to a war crime".

"Another tragic chapter in Lebanon's history is being written," United Nations rights office spokesman Thameen Al-Kheetan told reporters in Geneva.

He said the situation was already "catastrophic", voicing alarm at comments from Israeli officials.

US does 'not need' help from allies on Iran, Trump says

● **Trump accuses NATO of 'foolish mistake' over Strait of Hormuz**

● **Trump says 'we no longer need' help to reopen Strait of Hormuz**

● **Trump says Britain's Starmer made 'big mistake' not supporting US in Iran**

AFP | Washington, United States

President Donald Trump said Tuesday that US forces "no longer need" military help in the Iran war, after his calls for assistance from allies to reopen the Strait of Hormuz to oil traffic were largely

rebuffed.

The American president has spent recent days griping about how world powers have so far declined to send warships to escort tankers through the narrow waterway in and out of the Gulf and key to the transit of crude.

With the war in its third week, Trump has repeatedly stressed that US and Israeli air strikes have decimated Iran's leadership, military facilities, and weapons manufacturing capacity.

"The United States has been informed by most of our NATO 'Allies' that they don't want to get involved with our Military Operation against the Terrorist Regime of Iran, in the Middle East," Trump posted on his Truth Social platform.

"Because of the fact that we have had such Military Success, we no longer 'need,' or desire,

the NATO Countries' assistance -- WE NEVER DID! Likewise, Japan, Australia, or South Korea," Trump said, adding: "WE DO NOT NEED THE HELP OF ANYONE!"

Speaking of allies who have rejected his call for assistance, the 79-year-old Republican said he is "not surprised by their action, however, because I always considered N A T O , where we spend Hundreds of Billions of Dollars per year protecting these same Countries, to be a one way

street."

The US-Israeli war on Iran has expanded dramatically across the Middle East, with Iran targeting the energy facilities of its

crude-producing neighbors.

Tehran has also attacked and threatened tankers transiting the Strait of Hormuz, all but closing the vital waterway through which one fifth of global crude oil passes.

French President Emmanuel Macron insisted Tuesday that his country would not participate in operations to open the Strait of Hormuz given the current context of air strikes and other military dangers, but once the situation becomes "calmer" it could participate in an "escort system" alongside other nations.

Britain has also waved off Washington's request for assistance. But Trump on Monday suggested Paris and London would lend a hand to the United States in the operation, and said several other countries -- without naming them -- had responded favorably to his call.



France ready to join Hormuz ship escorts once situation 'calmer'

AFP | Paris, France

France is ready to help escort ships through the Strait of Hormuz but only once the situation has become "calmer", said President Emmanuel Macron yesterday.

His comments follow US President Donald Trump's demand that allies help secure the waterway effectively shut by Iran in response to the war launched by the United States and Israel on February 28.

Global oil prices have surged by 40 to

50 percent since Iran started attacking shipping in the critical waterway and launched waves of missile and drone strikes across the Gulf. "We are not a party to the conflict and therefore France will never take part in operations to open or liberate the Strait of Hormuz in the current context," Macron said.

"However, we are convinced that once the situation becomes calmer... we are ready, alongside other nations, to take responsibility for an escort system."



New particle discovered by Large Hadron Collider

Paris, France

The Large Hadron Collider has discovered a new particle, the 80th identified so far by the world's most powerful particle smasher, Europe's CERN physics laboratory announced Tuesday.

The new particle has been named "Xi-cc-plus". Scientists hope the particle -- which is similar to a proton but four times heavier -- will reveal more about the strange behaviour of quantum mechanics.

All the matter around us -- including the protons and neutrons that make up the nucleus of atoms -- are made of baryons.

These common particles are composed of three quarks,



A man rides his bicycle along the beam line of the Large Hadron Collider which are fundamental building blocks of matter.

Quarks come in six "flavours": up, down, charm, strange, top and bottom. Each has varying mass, electric charge and quantum properties.

In theory, there could be many different types of baryons that mix these flavours

-- however most are extremely difficult to observe.

To chase them down, the Large Hadron Collider sends particles whizzing around an underground ring at phenomenal speeds until they smash into each other.

This gives scientists a brief chance to measure how the more stable elements decay, then deduce the properties of the original particle.

The newly discovered "Xi-cc-plus" contains two "charm" quarks and one "down" quark.

Normal protons have two "up" quarks and one "down" quark. Because the new particle has two heavier "charm" quarks instead of "up" ones, it has a much greater mass.

Seven foreigners arrested in India after allegedly training Myanmar rebels: reports

Myanmar descended into civil war after a junta seized power in a 2021 coup

● **The Ukrainian foreign ministry confirmed Tuesday its citizens were detained by India**

● **The United States embassy in New Delhi said in a statement Tuesday they were aware of the matter**

AFP | New Delhi, India

Indian investigators have arrested seven foreigners, including six Ukrainians and an American, on suspicion of illegally crossing into neighbouring Myanmar to train armed militia groups, the public radio broadcaster reported yesterday.

Myanmar descended into civil war after a junta seized power in a 2021 coup, with pro-democracy guerrillas and ethnic-minority armed groups fighting for control of large parts of the country.

India has long been suspicious of certain Myanmar factions that have the same ethnicity as populations on the Indian side of the border, fearing a spillover of violence and unrest.

On Monday, a closed court in New Delhi remanded the seven foreign nationals in custody for 11 days of interrogation after they allegedly illegally entered sensitive Mizoram state without an official permit, All India Radio (AIR) reported.

The seven then allegedly passed from Mizoram into neighbouring Myanmar, where they were "training ethnic war groups... associated with insur-

gent groups in India", according to AIR.

They are also suspected to have illegally transported a "huge consignment of drones from Europe" into India for use in Myanmar, AIR said, without specifying the type of drones or their countries of origin.

After they returned to India, officials from the National Investigation Agency (NIA) arrested the Ukrainians in the cities of Delhi and Lucknow, and the American in Kolkata, the report said.

The Indian Express newspaper reported that they had been charged with conspiring to commit terrorist acts against the Indian state, a crime that carries a maximum penalty of life imprisonment.

Multiple calls by AFP to the NIA spokesman went unanswered on Tuesday.

The Ukrainian foreign ministry confirmed Tuesday its citizens were detained by India on March 13 and requested the country's authorities to provide "unimpeded consular access" to them.

"As of now, there are no proven facts confirming the involvement of the aforementioned Ukrainian citizens in illegal activities on the territory of India or Myanmar," it said in a statement.

"The embassy is in contact with other relevant Indian authorities to clarify all circumstances and reasons for the detention," it added.

The United States embassy in New Delhi said in a statement Tuesday they were aware of the matter but "cannot comment on cases involving U.S. citizens" for privacy reasons.

Mizoram's chief minister

claimed last year that "thousands" of Western mercenaries had passed through the state on the way to Myanmar, but the assertion is hard to verify.



India is building a 1,643-kilometre (1,020-mile) fence along its porous border with Myanmar, which runs through remote jungles and snow-capped Himalayan peaks.